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Political: African-American CBC Weekend

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Photo by Walter Oates/The Washington Times

At the black caucus annual dinner are (from left): Rep. Charles Rangel, New York Democrat, Harry Belafonte and his wife, Julia, Rep. Mickey Leland, Texas

Democrat, Rep. Julian Dixon, California Democrat, and Rep. Mervyn Dymally, California Democrat and chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Barry's party caps caucus weekend

By Gail A. Campbell
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Early yesterday morning the off-key Motown sounds of local band Mystique caused Mayor Marion Barry to grimace.

Holding court near a Washington Hilton dance floor, a smile on his face, the District's mayor sipped wine and greeted 500 guests at a party he hosted in honor of the 17th annual Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Weekend.

"I've given a party like this for the last nine years," the mayor said, straining to make himself heard above the music. "I intend to give one for the next 10. I'll be mayor until 1998, you know."

Down the hall, packed into another part of the hotel, some of the

15,000 persons who attended the caucus' more than 65 workshops, receptions and private parties over the last five days mingled with celebrities who flew in to see and be seen.

"I think what the weekend does more than anything else is allow those in attendance to rekindle their spirit," said caucus participant Bill Shearer, vice president and general manager of KGFJ radio in Los Angeles.

"It allows one to revitalize his own feeling about self. When you come in a room like this and see thousands of people, it makes you feel good about being black," Mr. Shearer said.

Earlier Saturday evening, Democratic presidential hopeful Jesse Jackson, his teen-age daughter in tow, had a private word in the hotel

lobby with former Gary, Ind., Mayor Richard Hatcher.

Other Democratic presidential contenders, such as Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, Missouri Rep. Richard Gephardt and Illinois Sen. Paul Simon, who had appeared earlier in the day at a candidates forum, showed up to shake a few hands at Saturday night's banquet.

"We use the dinner to promote an idea of where black people ought to be," said Rep. Mickey Leland, Texas Democrat, chairman of this year's banquet. He said 3,000 tickets were sold for the \$300-a-plate dinner held in the Hilton ballroom.

Mr. Jackson, the only presidential candidate scheduled to say a few words at the banquet, called on the well-heeled audience to "save the

American family by stopping drugs from coming into the country and jobs from going out."

Entertainer Harry Belafonte chose to take a few swipes at the current president.

"The civil rights movement has once again survived the vicious onslaught of Ronald Reagan," Mr. Belafonte said, who praised the caucus' opposition to Judge Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court.

Keynote dinner speaker Mariar Wright Edelman, executive director of the Children's Defense Fund, stuck to the weekend's theme, "Educating the Black Child."

"I applaud the black middle class

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for whom times are good tonight," Mrs. Edelman said.

"But," a man in the audience called out, bracing everyone for the other shoe to drop.

"It is the worst of times for poor black babies," Mrs. Edelman continued. "It is the worst of times for black youth trying to form families without training, without jobs, without a future."

"Unless the black middle class begins to sustain more leadership ... as role models, as advocates ... for black children where it matters ... then all of our Mercedes and Halston products will not hide our essential failure as a generation of 'haves' who did not protect the future of our children," Mrs. Edelman said.

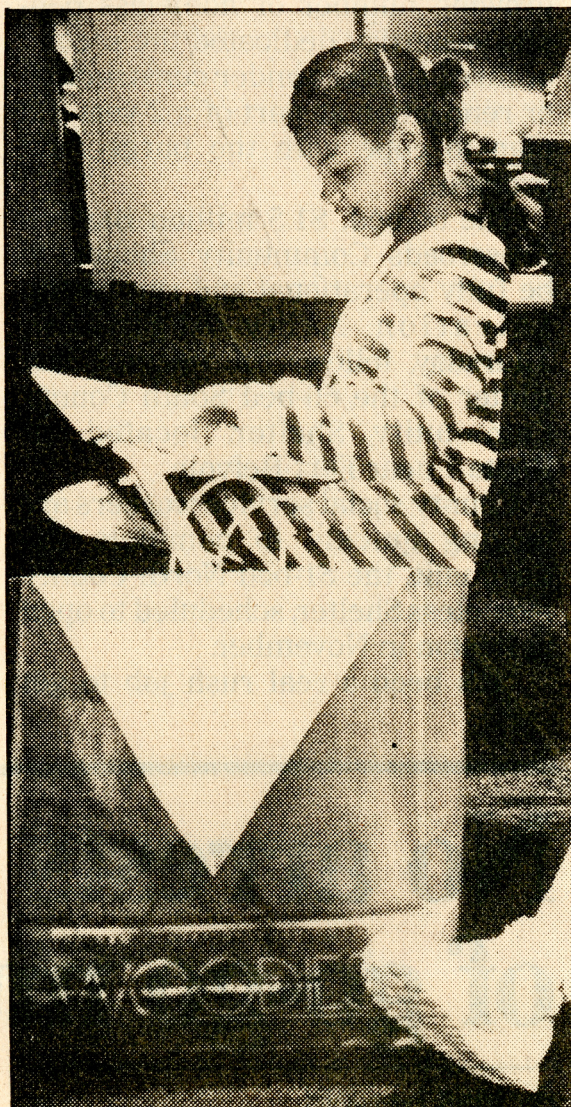
"Preach, sister, preach!" members of the audience screamed, jumping to their feet for a standing ovation.

The night before, at the Park Hyatt hotel, movie stars Danny Glover and Denzel Washington popped in at an exclusive dinner-dance given for House Budget Committee Chairman William H. Gray III.

The invitation-only gala attracted Coretta Scott King; Virginia Lt. Gov. L. Douglas Wilder Jr.; Randall Robinson, director of TransAfrica; and various business leaders and lobbyists.

Jazz musician George Howard performed while they sipped champagne and nibbled smoked salmon and Peking duck. The bill was picked up by a bevy of sponsors, including MCA Inc. and Mobil Oil.

The weekend's big fund-raisers — the Saturday banquet and two fashion shows sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus wives — will provide the non-profit Congress-



Turner Elementary School students (from the goods they collected in the booth of

sional Black Caucus Foundation with about \$800,000, said Rep. Julian Dixon, California Democrat and chairman of the foundation.

Proceeds fund the foundation's congressional fellows and summer intern programs, and grants to such organizations as the National Black Leadership Roundtable, chaired by D.C. Delegate Walter Fauntroy.

The Congressional Black Caucus was formed in 1969 by 13 members to strengthen efforts to draft legislation beneficial to blacks and minorities.

Today's 23-member caucus takes